SKETCH

W. Sherlock. 1800.

OF A

SERMON, &c.

By W. B. Kirwan.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED, A

DEDICATION.

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DEDICATION.

TO THE

GOVERNORS AND GOVERNESSES

OF THE

FEMALE ORPHAN HOUSE.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

WHATEVER tends to promote the intereſts of Religion, the beſt ſecurity of Female Innocence, and is not in itſelf diſhoneſt, muſt undoubtedly meet your approbation. It is on that ground only that the Editor of this

Sketch, takes the liberty of dedicating it to You, whoſe endeavours every Good Man muſt reverence, and every Wiſe Man aſsiſt. In times like the preſent, when irreligion and infidelity have infected, not merely men of much reading and little reflection—but even thoſe, to whom Nature and Providence have aſſigned the taſk of labour inſtead of ſpeculation, and whoſe only comforts muſt flow from that religion which they reject, every Publication which is likely to find its way into their hands, and urges the arguments for Religion with force, or ſtates the advantages of it with eloquence, muſt be uſeful.—Nor can an attempt to tranſmit from the Pulpit to the Preſs, ſuch reaſoning and ſuch eloquence, be juſtly reprehended; for who is he

he who would wiſh to confine within the walls of a Church the effects of a Diſcourſe, of which the intrinſic excellence, excluſive of the able and impreſſive manner in which it was delivered, may ſpread its ſalutary influence through the community, though perhaps with ſome loſs of its firſt ſtrength; as the undulations of a fluid when agitated by the impulſe of a falling body, become leſs ſtrong as they more widely circulate.—In the preſent inſtance it is hoped that the admirable man of whoſe production this is profeſſed to be but a ſketch, will take no offence; he *certainly* will not, if the merit of the intention can juſtify the act; for the idea of committing to paper ſo much of his diſcourſe, as a tolerable memory retained, originated in admiration of its excellence;

and the idea of communicating it to the Public, aroſe from a ſuggeſtion that it might be productive of ſome good to the cauſe of Religion, as well as of Charity. That this ſketch falls much ſhort of the original, muſt be granted—for who can tranſmit the effuſions of genius without ſuffering the ethereal ſpirit in ſome degree to evaporate in the transfuſion? Who can imbody on paper the firſt ſtrong impreſſion after the original has faded into a phantom of remembrance? The image which is reflected from mirror to mirror, will at laſt become obſcure and confuſed, and the fire of Fancy by ſucceſſive communications from breaſt to breaſt, will at laſt be extinguiſhed. If a ſpark of that flame which ſhone ſo bright in the original, ſhall be preſerved in this ſketch,

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it is all that reaſonably can be expected, and this much it is hoped is done.

Let it therefore be remembered, by him who reads this ſketch, that it is *but* a ſketch —and that what produces the principal effect in the diſcourſe of this celebrated Preacher, *cannot* be tranſcribed.—If it were aſked what that is, one could not anſwer that it was his face, or his figure, his voice, or his geſture, his vivid fancy, or his vehement invective. No, neither, nor all; but it is a portion of that wonderful quality, without which no man ever became a great man—no character can ever emerge into glory—a particle of that divine breath, which in a favoured few, is ſuperadded to the breath of life, fills them with

double

double ſoul, and accumulates around ſome grand purpoſe all the energies of human nature. To ſuch men the Univerſe is annihilated, and nothing remains but the object, and the mounting mind, which aſpires to its attainment, which deſcries the poſſibility of things afar off, and finds the means in the daring. It is that heroic quality, which infuſed in ampler portions, cuts the Gordian knot with the ſword of *Alexander*, burns the paper with the pen of *Rouſſeau*, and with the voice of GRATTAN, all but accompliſhes the redemption of a Nation. It is ENTHUSIASM ineffable, undefinable, inimitable! It is this quality which ſhines in this man's countenance, amplifies his figure, and communicates

municates to an Auditory *ſuch* feelings as no written Compoſition can produce,

To your protection, Ladies and Gentlemen, theſe pages are committed, by one who in publiſhing this outline of a diſcourſe which has produced ſo *ſingularly great* an effect, and ſeems ſo admirably fitted to ſerve the beſt intereſts of religion and charity, depends for his juſtification in this act, only on the intention with which it was undertaken.

SERMON.

2 CORINTHIANS, chap. 11. ver. 29.

Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not?

IT would be difficult to conceive any proof more ſtrong of the divine origin of the religion we profeſs, than that ſympathy with the children of misfortune which it inculcates, and by which the true diſciples of that religion are peculiarly diſtinguiſhed. If we wiſh to know the dignity of Chriſtianity, we muſt view its early profeſſors, elevated, as they are, above the common level of human nature, by the practice of thoſe virtues, which derive their efficacy from other motives

than the fear or hope of any thing which this world can offer, which connect the extremes of ſociety together by the bands of love, and exert their precious influence in promoting the happineſs of this life, while they look for their reward only in that which is to come. A more illuſtrious proof of this can be no where found than in the conduct of the Apoſtle, as it is deſcribed in the context, where we are told how often his liberty, his health, his ſafety and his life, had been hazarded for the welfare, the eternal welfare of his children in the Goſpel, where we find him ſacrificing much of the happineſs and comforts of this world, and ready to make a of them, all for the good of men, the love of Chriſt, and the Glory that ſhall be revealed hereafter.

With ſuch an example before us ſhall our virtues wait for the call of paſſion to rouſe them to exertion? Shall we make no effort to diſcharge the duties of benevolence, until an aggravated picture of Calamity is held up to extort compaſſion? Away with ſuch a thought! The virtues of a Chriſtian

a Chriſtian are ſteady, and are produced by an interior principle, which operates without the impulſe of external motives—they ariſe from a deliberate reſult of the underſtanding, weighing the immenſe importance of eternity againſt the trivial motives which influence ordinary men. His virtues are conſtant, becauſe they are produced by a conſtant and invariable cauſe, the Will of God revealed in his word, and aiming at a certain object—to ſecure the happineſs of his future exiſtence, and to avoid the everlaſting puniſhments which omnipotence has threatened. Such virtues will operate as well in the ſtagnation of paſſion as when the breath of eloquence has rouſed them into tempeſt!

Two motives I might uſe to induce you to protect thoſe deſtitute beings whoſe cauſe I am now to plead—the one, their temporal wants—the poverty, the ſuffering, and the wretchedneſs to which your neglect will expoſe them—the other a conſideration of thoſe eternal calamities which impend over them if, through your refuſal to protect them this day, they ſhall be left uneduca-

cated

cated—a prey to paſſion and to vice.—On the firſt of thoſe motives, I have often dwelt, when I have preſumed on former occaſions for this and for other inſtitutions to appear before you.—I have endeavoured with as much zeal as the caſe of unprotected infancy, helpleſs and wretched, muſt excite, and as much force as a very limited ſhare of ability could confer, to exhibit to you thoſe motives to compaſſion which the ſituation of female orphans ſo copiouſly ſupplies. It is the pride of my life that I have not urged thoſe motives in vain. It will afford pleaſure to my reflecting hours of remaining life, that I have found in you the hearts of men! I now expect to find you *more* than men, I expect to find you *Chriſtians!* I now addreſs not your paſſions but your reaſon—your religion. I call on you not as beings, who, liable to all the ſufferings of human nature yourſelves, can feel for thoſe who ſuffer, but as beings who profeſſing a religion of which the very eſſence is benevolence, and of which the duties are ſanctioned by everlaſting rewards and eternal puniſhments, are therefore bound by the ſtrongeſt obligations that

bind

bind reaſonable men to reſcue wretchedneſs and deſtitution from diſtreſs, and innocence from everlaſting ruin! On any other topic, I ſhall not ſay one word, not one word! And why ſhould I fear for the ſucceſs of this application? I am not afraid of it! tho' I forego thoſe arguments which never fail to reach the heart of man when they are rightly urged, yet I retain with me the voice of Reaſon and of God--I have with me the doctrines, the rewards, the puniſhments, of a religion which ſpread over the world not only unſupported, except by the purity of its doctrines, but in oppoſition to the united force of the world.—A religion, which, for three centuries, during which it ſtruggled, ſometimes with its ſtandard proſtrate, and ſometimes erect, againſt the majeſty of the Roman Eagle, for the empire of the human mind, —at laſt triumphed, while, on the one hand, were thoſe powerful armies, which had made the remoteſt corners of the world tributary to the Capitol, and on the other, a handful of Martyrs, bleeding on the ſcaffold, and wading through a ſea blood!

Nor

Nor was our religion, ſupported by the zeal of our early brethren, ſucceſsful only in reſiſting the aſſaults of force and growing beneath the ſcourge of perſecution—it was equally ſucceſsful, ſupported by the proſpect of infinite ſanctions of a future life, in defeating the machinations—and ſuffering the more ſubtle perſecution of the arch-apoſtate; he who combined the reflection of the philoſopher with the cruelty of the tyrant, and was at once the boaſt of learning by the depth of his reſearches, and the diſgrace of human nature by the capricious perverſion of his intellect.—Such is the power, which future proſpects have on the mind of reflecting and reſponſible man!—Have we no other proof of their efficacy?—What ſpread the doctrines of the grand impoſter over the extenſive continent of Aſia, and propagated them over ſo large a portion of Europe?—If I might be permitted to digreſs, it would be eaſy to ſhew the cauſe—it was not the ſword which flamed in the hand of Mahomet, nor the cup of pleaſure which he adminiſtered to his diſciples—it was thoſe ſenſual and luxurious ſcenes to which he pointed the hopes of his

his followers hereafter, and which were ſo well fitted to inflame their deſires; it was the voluptuous elyſium, to which he led their expectations, not the preſent gratification, in which he ſuffered them to indulge, that ſecured reception to his doctrines. But it was eaſy to propagate a ſyſtem, which offered a continuation of ſenſual pleaſures in another life in addition to power and pleaſure in this; but what, except the agency of infinite power and the proſpect of everlaſting reward—could have propagated, in oppoſition to the united powers of the earth, a religion of which the glory was ſuffering, which precipitated ſelf-love from her throne, taught the opulent to deſpiſe their wealth—the poor to love their poverty—the wiſe to reject their wiſdom, and immolated man at the foot of the croſs! And was it to the poor, the unlettered, the ignorant, that this religion was preached with ſo much ſucceſs?—No it was in the very ſeat of arts and learning, where the human mind had received its higheſt poliſh—it was at Athens—it was alſo in Aſia, among the luxurious, the refined, the ſenſual Aſiatics. It was in Epheſus, the very temple

of

of refined ſenſuality—that Paul and Barnabas firſt opened the ſelf-denying page of the Goſpel, and it was here that the ſimplicity of the Goſpel found its beſt reception. Should I be afraid then to make the perilous experiment of committing the cauſe of theſe orphans to the influence of ſuch a religion? No! I am not afraid—never did I addreſs you with more confidence of ſucceſs than now, in appealing to you as Chriſtians to exerciſe a chriſtian virtue! Why then do I call the experiment *perilous?* Becauſe, if it ſhould fail, they are loſt—*you* are loſt!—For whither can they fly for ſafety if *you* ſpurn them from you this day? whither ſhall they run to ſhelter themſelves from thoſe temptations, which in their circumſtances, ſcarcely any virtue can reſiſt, and which, if they are not reſiſted, muſt plunge them into eternal wretchedneſs? And where can *you* find ſafety if you ſhake off the helpleſs, the infant, the female orphan, who hangs on you for protection—who calls on you to ſave her from vice—from ruin—from temporal and everlaſting miſery?—Where can you find ſafety as a STATE, if you reject a call to e-

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ducate the youth of your country, to ſave them from being carried away in that tide of infidelity, which is overflowing your land, and ſcattering the ſeeds of treaſon and rebellion againſt human as well as divine authority, wherever it turns its deſtructive courſe? On this ſubject you have already been much—much to blame.

You call yourſelves *civilized!*—how is it then, that it depends on the caſual ſucceſs of this kind of application to you, whether the bulk of your country ſhall or ſhall not be educated? What have you not already ſuffered from this inattention to what in every country ſhould be a prime object of its government? Had the ſupport of inſtitutions of this kind been made a legiſlative meaſure twenty years back, you would now have had *people*!—the maſs of your poor would have been tinctured with ſome regard for order and morality—the miſchievous doctrines of a Payne, would not have taken root in your ſoil, had you pre-occupied it by implanting in it the ſeeds of virtue, and the doctrines of religion—you would not now be obliged to fly

to your capital for protection, or repoſe, with arms in your hands—you would not have clubs of conſpirators, deliberating upon murder in every corner of your country, had you early attended to the education of your poor—you would not now be reduced to the neceſſity of ſtrong, and extraordinary exertions of power, to reſtrain ſedition and treaſon, from reducing the beautiful fabric of ſociety to a maſs of ruin, nor would your legiſlators have fallen victims to the raging appetite for blood, which pollutes your land!—Yes, unhappy man!* you would have been ſafe, amidſt a numerous tenantry, who have flouriſhed under your indulgence.—Your wife, would not now have been the widow of a murdered Lord, nor your infants fatherleſs, had your country been wiſe!

But it is not to the advancement of the temporal happineſs of theſe orphans, and of your country, that I would turn your attention: it is to their happineſs hereafter.—Let them hereafter be able to trace their

* Alluding to the melancholy fate of Mr. Harman.

their deliverance from temporal and eternal ruin, to your exertions this day.—Give them education—if they are to periſh, let them not periſh from ignorance which you may remove.—The mariner with all the helps of art and experience, is expoſed to the danger of ſhipwreck from ſtorms which he cannot prevent;—how much more dangerous would be his ſituation, were he ignorant of the rocks by which he is ſurrounded, and the ſhoals on which he is driving, and which his ignorance would make his ruin?—Will you ſuffer theſe infants to ſet forward on the tempeſtuous ſea of life, to be agitated by the worſt paſſions, without any principle of virtue, or religion, to guide their deſperate courſe? Conſider your own ſituation—you have had the advantage of education?—What are the benefits you derive from thoſe advantages? You yield to the influence of your appetites—you violate thoſe duties which reaſon and your religion preſcribe—your convictions are often in the mount with God, while your paſſions grovel in the duſt. True; but how often when the fillet of the victim has been round your temples, has

the voice of an informed conſcience reſcued you from deſtruction ?—The impreſſions of early education, though they may be weakened by the lapſe of paſſing time, can, perhaps, never be wholly obliterated, and while *they* remain, if our education has been what it ought to be, there will ever be a principle within, intervening between us and perdition. While this principle remains vigorous, though its operation may not be ſufficiently ſtrong to conquer the enemy in every rencounter, it will at leaſt enable us to fight it out to the laſt, it will be a ſtrong hold in which virtue may take refuge, and from which perhaps, at ſome time, ſhe may ſally forth to victory.

We are told in the book of Exodus, that when the Iſraelites had reached the borders of the promiſed land, the High Prieſt aſcended a hill, from which he could ſee the country they had paſſed, and that into which they were about to enter ; he then addreſſed them, and brought to their minds the wonderful deliveries which the Almighty had wrought in their favour, reproached them with

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their ingratitude, called to their recollection their many prevarications, and denounced the vengeance of God againſt them for thoſe tranſgreſſions, if they would not repent of, and forſake them. We are told, that this addreſs had ſuch an effect upon even this ſtiff-necked people, that they anſwered only with their tears, and that their ſorrow was ſo great and continued, that their prieſts, the Levites, were obliged to go from rank to rank, to aſſuage their grief, and inſpire them with comfort. Yes! when the mind has been early impregnated with religious principles, it is eaſy to call it back from the career of perdition—a fit of ſickneſs—one happy ſtroke of adverſity—one look of Chriſt to Peter—may melt it to contrition—and turn it to its God! Like the ſacred fire which was hidden under ground by the High Prieſt when the Jews were carried into captivity, the efficacy of a religious education may for a time be ſuppreſſed, but it can never be extinguiſhed: When on the return of the Jews, this fire was ſought for, it was thought to be extinct, but on the operation of the air, to which it was expoſed, it blazed forth with

more

more than its former vigour.—The ſpirit of early piety, thus, may be for a time buried beneath the rubbiſh of the paſſions, but the ſlighteſt incident may again rouſe it into action. What then is it to which I would now point your attention? It is this—if you cannot ſave thoſe orphans, at leaſt do not damn them! Go not before your Maker with your brother's blood upon your head! Give them the ſame arms with which you have yourſelves been enabled to meet the enemy; and if they do not then fight well the good fight of faith, you ſtand excuſed—their blood be upon their own head. While they are ſtruggling with the miſeries and wants to which poverty muſt always be ſubject, point out to them another world in which their ſufferings will ceaſe—direct their courſe thither! teach them the ſcience of eternity! teach them to look on this world as on a ſcene through which they paſs in a moment—to one in which they are to dwell for ever!—As the rapid ſtream juſt glances at its banks while it ruſhes into the boſom of the ocean!——Is it not reaſonable to ſuppoſe that theſe objects would be thought worthy

thy the care of chriſtians profeſſing a religion of charity, and believing the eternity of rewards and puniſhments? And yet had your attention been called to thoſe objects only, theſe nurſeries would now have been a deſert.—Even as they are, when every art which eloquence could uſe to play upon your paſſions has been tried, as well as every argument uſed which could influence your reaſon, let me not meet the ſmile of infidelity, when I ſay, Hell ſwarms with thoſe whom you have ſpurned from your care.—In this, "Age of Reaſon," I ſhall not recur to the burning letters of revelation to paint the ſituation of thoſe, who ſink into the grave covered with all the pollution with which vice and crimes can defile them.—Let him who boldly denies a Firſt Cauſe, and him who in the humbler ſtrain of infidelity, leaves the Deity his Throne, but wreſts from his hand the thunder and the bolt—who, inſtead of Juſtice aud Wiſdom, inveſts the Almighty with a boundleſs placability, which crimes cannot offend, and inſult cannot provoke—let them appeaſe the pangs of remorſe by this creed of abſurdity if they cannot

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be convinced by this ſingle argument—that this beauteous ſyſtem of things by which we are ſurrounded muſt have had an intelligent and an omnipotent cauſe, and that if there be any diſtinction between the brighteſt virtue and the moſt abominable vice, there muſt be in another life, a reward for the one, and a puniſhment for the other. This is the doctrine of reaſon! —a doctrine which is ſo natural to the human mind, that it has ſhone forth in every age through the thickeſt darkneſs of Paganiſm.—But whatever Reaſon may ſay on this point, Revelation is explicit: all there announces a future and an everlaſting ſtate.—Jeſus ſpeaks the ſame language as the Prophets, but more expreſs.—Yet even *his* language men have affected to miſunderſtand—and though they have been compelled by both Reaſon and Revelation, to acknowlege a future ſtate of retribution, they have at once ſolaced and deceived themſelves, that its puniſhments are not eternal! "I may be puniſhed—but I ſhall not be puniſhed for ever!" has been their language—"I may ſuffer "much, but my ſufferings, however long, will "have

" have an end!" And why ſo much pains to controvert the eternity of puniſhment? only that they may enjoy leſs diſturbance from within—that the gnawing of the worm may be leſs keen and frequent, while they ſacrifice the hopes of a future life to the gratification of the preſent. Such is the advantage they derive from venturing on opinions which the wiſeſt and beſt men have rejected, to which Reaſon herſelf, though bribed by Ambition, by Avarice, by Pride, and by Pleaſure, will not give her ſanction, and which if they be true, muſt extinguiſh hope, when they put an end to fear! but if they are falſe—if there be a miſtake on the momentous point—whether man or his puniſhments be eternal, what muſt be the conſequences of the miſtake? Can you view them and not recoil with horror from the proſpect?—And ſurely, is it not a very clear caſe, that the conceits of infidelity, the ſuggeſtions by which vice and paſſion juſtify themſelves againſt the accuſations of conſcience, are more likely to be true than the declarations of the Goſpel, which men, whoſe underſtanding has enlightened, and

virtues adorned mankind, have believed? Would you venture your property on the ſuperior probability in the former caſe beyond the latter? You would not—And will you then riſk the event of eternity, on a chance, on which you would not venture a ſhilling? But if you now cheriſh ſuch an error, the time will ſhortly come when the deception will vaniſh.—On a death bed the arguments to which you now truſt, will, depend upon it, loſe their force; Reaſon will reſort to other topics, and Imagination will look forward to other proſpects! the brilliant obſcurity of eternity will burſt upon your eye—the ſcene will convince even by the majeſty of its ſilence!—A death bed is a wonderful reaſoner!—would it were as often marked by the dew of repentance, as it is by the ſtare of horror!—But I urge this no further—I leave you to be merciful to yourſelves, by being merciful to theſe orphans: be merciful to them—be merciful to all of their deſcription in the nation—it is due to them by you, as Chriſtians.—I have often experienced

your

your feelings for diſtreſs as men, I now leave you to the influence of higher motives.

But a moment more I will detain you. On former occaſions the copious ſtream of charity has flowed liberally from you, for the relief of the temporal wants of thoſe wretched and helpleſs ſupplicants—you are ſolicited this day for aid, not merely to prolong their exiſtence, but to educate them—to open to them a door to happineſs in a future ſtate.—I have omitted to appeal to your humanity—to your feelings—and have confined myſelf ſolely to your reaſon, and your religion.—Oh, may theſe orphans have no reaſon to reproach me for the omiſſion!—I have often addreſſed you in behalf of local charities, frequently for the charitable inſtitution of the pariſh in which we now ſtand—your aids have been liberal—but liberal as they have been, ſuch aid would now be inſufficient.—Theſe children belong not to this pariſh excluſively, but to you all—there are one hundred and twenty of them—and at leſs than the rate of ten pounds each, they cannot

not be ſupported, excluſive of collateral charges.—Twelve hundred pounds therefore, will be neceſſary—with leſs the inſtitution muſt be reduced—and where is he among you, who will take one of theſe little ones by the hand and leave it at the door, to make its way through the world in ignorance, and in poverty?—No! No! there is none ſuch among you—I know you too well to have a doubt on the event—too often have I been through your indulgence, their fortunate advocate.—The recollection of thoſe ſucceſsful endeavours, will, when I am called before the throne of my God, give me humble hope of his forgiveneſs—ſome proſpect of ſharing in his infinite mercy!

Now to God the Father, &c.